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Brian Williams Highlights Complaints EU is Going Too Green with Light Bulb Ban

By Brad Wilmouth (Bio | Archive)
 September 3, 2009 - 06:03 ET



There must have been a twitch in the universe on Wednesday evening as NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams – who has a history of highlighting concerns of interest to the environmentalist left – actually ran a story highlighting complaints by some Europeans that the "going green" movement is going too far as the European Union is banning the use of old-fashioned lightbulbs in favor of a more energy efficient model. Correspondent Dawna Friesen noted that the new bulbs not only are more expensive but that the quality of light produced is inferior to traditional lightbulbs, as she warned that the same ban is coming to America in just a few years.



Williams's history of devoting time to environmental issues has included such notable episodes as the time he **confessed to fretting about** whether he should choose paper or plastic at the grocery store -- which he referred to as "quaking with fear" -- as well as a discussion from his days anchoring MSNBC's News with Brian Williams on **whether it was "downright unpatriotic"** to drive an SUV after the 9/11 attacks because of America's dependence on oil imports. So, if even Brian Williams has hesitation about switching over to these newer-style bulbs, they must really be awful.

Returning to Wednesday night, Williams set up Friesen's story:

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If you're a fan of old-school lightbulbs ... then you may be pretty unhappy these days with these new energy efficient lightbulbs that are in wider use. As you know, in some cases, they're now mandatory, and they don't give off the same old glow. Europe has actually been ahead of us in the switchover, and not everyone there is happy about it.

Friesen passed on complaints by Europeans who are "incandescent with rage," as one man proclaimed that "I hate them," while another complained that "you can't read by them. They're useless." She translated the words of another man, who seemed to be speaking French, who complained about the price: "Being green is okay," says this store manager, "but at some point, you get fed up paying so much."

As she elaborated, the NBC correspondent quipped that some believe "whoever has forced us to use these is a bit of a dimwit." Friesen: "The

biggest complaint about the new ones is the quality of the light just isn't as nice, and it takes about a minute for these to get as intense as the old ones. Some people think whoever has forced us to use these is a bit of a dimwit."

After mentioning the possibility that there will be "lightbulb police" in the E.U., Friesen concluded with a warning for Americans: "And so, by 2012, all old bulbs will be outlawed in Europe. There's already talk of a new agency to police bulb use. And get ready America.: You're next. The phase out there begins in 2012, plenty of time to rage against the dying of the light."

Back to Williams' history of interest in environmental issues, on May 7, 2007, the NBC anchor introduced a report on the Nightly News:

Tonight, as part of our ongoing series of reports on the environment, 'America Goes Green,' we take on the question that can make otherwise competent adults quake with fear. We've all been there. You come to the end of the checkout line and then comes that question, 'paper or plastic?' For that one brief moment, we grocery buyers are made to feel like the fate of the planet hinges on our decision. Is there a correct answer?

And on the January 7, 2002, News with Brian Williams on MSNBC, he plugged a segment about whether auto makers should be forced to sell more fuel efficient vehicles: "At issue tonight, with the U.S. locked in dependence on foreign oil, is it downright unpatriotic to drive an SUV? Should Americans be somehow forced to get better mileage or should the government stay out of the car business?"

After a couple of similar plugs, he got to the segment -- which was fairly balanced as it pitted Jerry Taylor of the libertarian CATO Institute against Williams himself who asked contrarian questions of Taylor as Williams relayed that Tom Friedman of the New York Times "couldn't join us tonight."

Below is a complete transcript of the story from the Wednesday, September 2, NBC Nightly News:

BRIAN WILLIAMS: If you're a fan of old-school lightbulbs – and this is the point where we point out that our parent company G.E. is pretty famous for making them, among other things, dating back to Thomas Edison himself – then you may be pretty unhappy these days with these new energy efficient lightbulbs that are in wider use. As you know, in some cases, they're now mandatory, and they do not give off the same old glow. Europe has actually been ahead of us in the switchover, and not everyone there is happy about it. Here is NBC's Dawna Friesen from London.

DAWNA FRIESEN: The traditional lightbulb – invented 130 years ago – it profoundly changed our world, illuminating our lives like never before. But we've given up gas guzzlers, learned to reuse and recycle, and soon it will be lights out on the old bulb and on with these: low-energy compact fluorescent lamps, a prospect that has some people incandescent with rage. What do you think of the new bulb?

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #1: I hate them. Yeah, okay, I hate them.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #2: -because you can't read by them. They're useless.

FRIESEN: We all know what the old bulbs are like – nice and bright. The biggest complaint about the new ones is the quality of the light just isn't as nice, and it takes about a minute for these to get as intense as the old ones. Some people think whoever has forced us to use these is a bit of a dimwit. Simon Bencher's family has been selling lightbulbs in London for 100 years.

SIMON BENCHER: People are concerned about being forced to do anything. I think people would rather be left to their own devices to do their bit for the environment..

FRIESEN: He's stockpiled hundreds of the old bulbs.

BENCHER: Yesterday, alone, we sold probably close to 1,000.

FRIESEN: And across Europe, people are hoarding the old 100-watt bulbs because the European Union has banned retailers from importing any more. The cost of the new ones, about \$14 apiece. "Being green is okay," says this store manager, "but at some point, you get fed up paying so much." They do use 80 percent less electricity and last eight to ten years. The British government estimates that if every house in the country used three low-energy lightbulbs, it would save enough power to light the nation's streets for a year. And so, by 2012, all old bulbs will be outlawed in Europe. There's already talk of a new agency to police bulb use. And get ready America.: You're next. The phase out there begins in 2012, plenty of time to rage against the dying of the light. Dawna Friesen, NBC News, London.

—Brad Wilmouth is a news analyst at the Media Research Center.



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Kinda sad when Green means possible mercury poisoning...

September 3, 2009 - 06:51 ET by [spscintyre](#)

When it comes to government, its not whether the glass is half full or empty, its that the glass is just to big.

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Brian Williams must not have gotten the talking point

September 3, 2009 - 06:59 ET by [Worried](#)

It was Bush who banned good old-fashioned lightbulbs starting in 2012.

I heard one of the truthtellers talk about what happens when one of the green bulbs smashes to the ground in the EU.

You have to air out the house, wear the same kind of garb that DEA agents wear to investigate crack houses to clean up the mess, and seek emergency treatment if you touch any of the stuff from the lightbulb.

Stock up on lightbulbs now.

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Some of what you say is

September 3, 2009 - 07:14 ET by [motherbelt](#)

Some of what you say is true; some not.

Snopes has investigated the claims, including the woman in Maine who was told she had to hire an EPA crew to clean up. That was in 2007. The recommendations have now changed, but they are still WAY too much trouble for the goal.

[Read the procedure here.](#)

And I'm betting many people will just scoop them up and put them in the regular garbage.

Not only that, but who needs the constant worry of "did I do it right or is the air in my home poisoned now?"

Of course, this might be a good example of what is meant by "green jobs." Serv-Pro and other cleaning services could develop "Mercury cleanup teams" to come in and do the job properly and dispose of the material (at less than EPA prices). Someone else might develop an air filter that actually removes any mercury vapor from the air. (But then you probably have to call Serv-Pro to come in and change the filter!)

There could be lots of new jobs created by this!!

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And EPA is a bastion of

September 3, 2009 - 09:36 ET by [danbo](#)

And EPA is a bastion of science.

Can we say Alan Carlin.

Limited Disclosure: I used to belong to the Sierra Club untill they went crazier. Worse of all, I was bribed by Exxon with free New Orleans Saints glasses with fill ups in the 70's.

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Have a dimmer switch?

September 3, 2009 - 07:00 ET by [Mica the Magnificent](#)

If you have dimmer switches throughout your house as I do, you have to pay \$11.99 (at Target) \$14.99 (at Walgreens) for ONE dimmer-switch compatible fluorescent bulb

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